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Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is La Vecchia Religione?

It is the Old Religion of Italy. Within it are contained the pre-Christian European mystery teachings. La Vecchia Religione is the Witch sect of Old Italy.

2. What are the origins of Stregheria?

Stregheria has its roots in ancient Etruscan religion, which itself was inherited from Neolithic religion. There are surprisingly few elements in Stregheria that can be said to be strictly Roman influences, and it should be noted that a Sicilian branch of Witchcraft also exists and is different in many ways from the Italian mainland traditions. Some modern systems of Stregheria contain various elements of Tuscan peasant religion mixed with material Medieval Christian heresy sects, particularly those involving Saint worship. Catholicism served as a veneer that was fitted over the Old Religion in order to survive during the period of violent persecution at the hands of the Inquisition and secular authorities. To many modern Italian Witches, most Catholic saints are simply ancient pagan gods dressed in Christian garb. The majority of systems within Stregheria have removed all vestiges of Catholic veneer and have returned to their full pagan heritage.



3. What is the Arician System of Stregheria?

It is a modern system incorporating a form of the mystery cult of Diana and Rex Nemorensis, which once thrived in the Arician grove at lake Nemi in ancient Roman times. The Arician Tradition, known as the Arician Ways, embraces the ancient European mystery teachings of pre-Christian Western Civilization. The Arician Tradition strives to maintain the ancient mystery teachings while at the same time working to adapt to modern times. Therefore we do embrace new material and teachings, but we do not discard older material.

4. How does Stregheria differ from Wicca?

There are many elements in our tradition of Stregheria that are different from Wicca. We follow a slightly different Mythos from Wicca and thus the Treguenda (Sabbat) that appear in the Wheel of the Year are culturally different from Wiccan Sabbats. Our rituals are very structured and reflect a philosophy of "adding but never removing" elements from our rites. We have a strong commitment to family and clan, reflected in our practices of ancestor reverence through spirits known as Lare.

We believe our tradition follows what we would call an Elder Faith, the Old Religion, from which many of the elements of modern-day Wicca have been derived.

5. Does Italian Witchcraft include practices of harmful magic?

Because the Italian Craft has roots of great antiquity there are elements of what can be called *war magic*. This type of magic is only used after a magical or psychic attack has been launched against practitioners of the Old Religion, and is therefore a defensive art. We do not draw "first blood" with the art of magic, meaning that we do not launch the first assault. However, we do practice *magical binding* as a preemptive act when the need to defend against a real threat is apparent. There is no intent to harm with an act of binding. Although it is not our way to start a fight, we are more than willing to end one with the full intention and effort of winning.

6. Aren't all Streghe Hereditary?

No, not at this time, although for many centuries one had to be "of the blood" to be Strega. There were blood witches among those Aradia led, and certainly between her time and the late 20th Century, most streghe had been raised in family traditions. But there has long been the

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inclusion of spouses who appeared interested and so inclined, and a provision for bringing devoted outsiders into one of the clans.

7. Do I have to be Italian to practice Stregheria?

No, you don't. Stregheria is a spiritual path that is open to all. It is, however, based on traditional Italian witchcraft and does have an Italian flavor. It is primarily derived from Etruscan religion rather than Roman.

8. Do the Streghe worship the Roman Gods and Goddesses?

In the Arician Tradition, we worship a pantheon that is different from the urban gods of the Romans. Some of those deities were shared, however, with the Latins, and some with the Etruscans, and some of them are in our pantheon, most notably Diana, whose worship was focused at a temple at in the Alban Hills. Our principle name for the Goddess and God is Uni and Tagni, taken from the Etruscans. However, there are other Streghe in Italy who do not follow our tradition, who may worship the urban gods of the Romans.

9. How can I learn more about Stregheria?

Read *Ways of the Strega* which was released in February, 2000 as *Italian Witchcraft, Ways of the Strega* and *Hereditary Witchcraft*, both by Raven Grimassi. You may purchase *Raven's Call*, a journal published by Raven Grimassi. Also recommended are *The Golden Bough* by Frazer, and *The Evil Eye* by Elworthy.

10. Can I be initiated into the Arician tradition?

Yes, but being initiated requires finding a teacher under whom you can study. You can dedicate yourself as a solitary practitioner until you are able to find a teacher.

11. How much time is required in order to advance between degrees of initiation?

We do not have a set period of time, as this is a matter between student and teacher. However, we do encourage each person to participate in the eight festivals of the year, and the full moon of each month during that year cycle, before asking to move on to the next level. Elevation to the next degree is something bestowed upon students because their efforts and their understanding have displayed to their teachers that it is time, and not simply because a required period of study has passed.

12. How can I find a teacher?

Finding a teacher can be difficult. An online Course of Study is available through Raven's Loft store (<http://www.ravensloft.biz/>). You can also do an Internet search on Strega or Stregheria, and talk to your local occult or witch shop. Caution is urged when encountering groups or individuals that claim the system known as Stregoneria (as opposed to Stregheria). One example is the organization known as "Stregoenria Italiana" which promotes a form of stregoneria that is little more than Catholic-rooted folk magic having little if any relationship to authentic forms of Italian Witchcraft. However some practitioners of Stregoneria erroneously insist on referring to themselves as Witches instead of sorcerers.

Another suggestion for seekers is to attend pagan gatherings and lectures. Read whatever you can. Subscribe to pagan journals. The Strega Path is growing, and when the time is right, the teacher will appear.

13. I don't know anyone in my area who practices Stregheria. How can I find a group?

Not all areas have Strega groups, but the Strega Path is expanding into several areas of the U.S. There are small pockets of initiates on the West Coast, East Coast, a few southern States and even some in the Mid-West.

14. Does gender or sexual preference matter in the Strega tradition?

We are opposed to discrimination in any form and try to accommodate all seekers, however, since Italian Witchcraft is a nature religion, we seek balance in all things. This can require compromises in order to find one's place in the tradition.

15. Does your tradition use ritual nudity?

Most, but not all, Strega traditions do. The Arician tradition works six months out of the year robed and six months skyclad.

16. Does your tradition use sexual practices?

Because the Italian Craft is rooted in the ancient fertility cult of Old Europe there is an element of sensuality and sexual theme within some of the rituals. We only incorporate this in a spiritual setting. No one is ever forced or manipulated into anything that he or she is unwilling to participate in. Outside of the religion some practitioners occasionally use sex magic with willing participants under mutual and free consent. Minors are not allowed to participate or be present at any ritual that involves nudity, sensuality, or sexuality.

17. Who is Aradia?

Aradia is the name taken (in honor of an ancient goddess) by the woman who we sometimes refer to as *The Holy Strega*. Her followers knew her as *Aradia di Toscano* and also called her *La Bella Pellegrina* or the Beautiful Pilgrim.

Our traditions teaches that Aradia was born in Tuscany (legends states 1313) and was taught the Old Ways, by her aunt. As a young woman, she would walk through the Alban Hills near Lake Nemi and contemplate the fate of the people of Italy who were downtrodden by the nobility and the Church. One day, Aradia had a moment of spiritual enlightenment in which she knew she must challenge the existing order. In this moment, she heard the word *MoonShadow* and began her spiritual teachings. Aradia gathered streghe, outlaws, and others who dwelt in the forests around Nemi during the 14th century, and taught the Ways. her disciples formed what is known as the Triad Clans, from which our Tradition had descended.

In 1890 Charles Leland published a distorted version of the Aradia story that he received from a woman named Maddalena, who claimed to be a witch. Our tradition's version differs significantly from this published version.

18. What are the Triad Clans?

The Triad Clans are an alliance of three related Witch Clans known as the Tanarra, Janarra, and Fanarra. These Clans are also known as the Mystery Keepers. The Tanarra maintain the ancient stellar mystery teachings. The Janarra keep the lunar mysteries and the Fanarra are guardians of the earth mysteries. According to oral tradition these Clans were formed by the followers of Aradia shortly after her disappearance.

19. What is a Boschetto?

A Boschetto is a group of Witches numbering from 3 - 13 members who join together from worship, study, and fellowship. In Wicca this would be called a coven.